

## **Island Review April 2020**

Submitted by Valerie Rohrig

Here in Emerald Isle we already have our flippers crossed for a great 2020 season! The volunteers in the Emerald Isle Sea Turtle Patrol are trained and ready to start walking, although May 1st is officially the first day of the 2020 season. Our program continues to grow each year with returning members and eager new volunteers. It's always fun to feel, and be part of, the excitement that skitters thru all of us who love all things sea turtle.

In past articles I've referenced the "Nest Response Team" (NRT's). The volunteers who are NRT members receive more extensive training in order to be tagged with a state permit for involvement with the sea turtles and the nests. NRT's actually receive permits sanctioned by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. This allows NRT's to identify turtle species when turtle tracks are found, complete nest reports that are submitted into State data, locate eggs, relocate nests (if needed and with permission) and prepare specimens for DNA testing. Also, NRT's are authorized to rescue sick sea turtles and transport them for treatment.

We currently have 8 NRT members and I thought it would be interesting to let them explain to you how they became interested in sea turtles.

### **Dale Baquer Program Coordinator/NRT**

I grew up here in Cape Carteret. I've always had a love for animals and the beach. I fell in love with sea turtles while volunteering at the PKS Aquarium! I joined the EI patrol 12 years ago. Things changed when I meet Pam Minnick. I credit her and all of the former NRT's for teaching me so much. Pam (RIP) was a great mentor and friend. Former NRT Kevin Geraghty continues to mentor me from afar. Sea Turtle Conservation has become a labor of love and my passion.

### **Heather Keever NRT**

About 10 years ago my children and I were lucky enough to stumble upon a nest in Emerald Isle that was about to hatch. From the moment I saw those tiny hatchlings make their way to the ocean I knew I had to find a way to help them. I joined the Emerald Isle Sea Turtle Patrol and eventually was asked to join the Nest Response Team. I am so grateful to be able to share my love for Sea Turtles with others and feel honored for the opportunity to work with such an amazing group of people.

### **Cheryl Balthrop NRT**

Taking the advice of a former principal, instead of "retiring," I "redirected" my time and passion. I looked for something I could do that allowed me to enjoy the environment we had recently moved to plus make a difference, whether small or large. I have enjoyed the early mornings as a walker finding tracks of a nester and the excitement as a late night nest sitter watching a nest boil. I've enjoyed the camaraderie of zone members as a co-coordinator and now enjoy the added responsibility of being part of the Nest Response Team. Still, my favorite part is seeing the expressions of those who witness a nest boil for the first time and knowing they understand how amazing the whole process

becomes.

**Liz Cox NRT**

I have always been interested in sea turtles and their behaviors (I grew up here in eastern NC). I moved back to the coast after being in the Piedmont area for 18 years. When I found out I would be living in EI I began searching for sea turtle programs and found EISTP. Cheryl B, Cindy H, and Dale B were the first members I met. As it turns out they were the exact members I needed to meet. So here I am

**Cindy Henry NRT**

In 2005 I got the opportunity to start working from home more. I read the Island Review and saw the article for the yearly meeting in April. I went to the meeting, met my Zone coordinator Peggy Fogleman, and started walking. I got a call late one night from Pam at the beginning of that season. There was a nesting turtle in front of Ocean Reef and Pam asked me to go over there. Jan Voelpel from Zone 4 join me. I was mesmerized! There was just no going back for me! To make it that much more interesting and addictive, I had the privilege of being mentored by Jim Craig, Pam and Bob Horner. Peggy had to drop out from being Zone coordinator due to health issues and I was asked to take Zone 3...YAY!

**Valerie Rohrig NRT**

My passion for sea turtles was ignited when I snorkeled with them in Hawaii years ago. As I approached retirement in 2010, I already KNEW I was moving to EI and I found out about the EI Sea Turtle Patrol so I stalked then coordinator Pam Minnick for information about the program! I've loved the many jobs I've done in the EISTP but I'm most proud of being able to contribute to supporting conservation of Sea Turtles thru my position as an NRT, as one of the program photographers and thru these educational articles that I submit each month. As I approach my 11th season, I'm as excited now as I was that first season!

*Ruthie Gomez-Stuart, Co-Coordinator/NRT, and Susan Smith, NRT, are both much valued members of our team and will be introduced in a later article!*

**Remember...leave only your footprints behind on the beach!**

Catch us at: [eiseaturtlepatrol.org](http://eiseaturtlepatrol.org)